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Report on Jordan Civil Disturbances

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Reports received [REDACTED] up to 1400 EST Tuesday indicate that the situation in Jordan is still tense. The French news agency and the Israeli radio reported late this morning that demonstrators tore down the flag over the U.S. consulate, AFP adding that an attack was later directed against the French consulate where the personnel took refuge on the roof. AFP reported that in the streets of the Old City the crowd is "pillaging and shouting" and loudspeakers are announcing the Government's resignation, and the Arab Legion is patrolling constantly "but with little effect." Curfew in Jerusalem and Bethlehem has been ordered from 1600 to 0600 hours.

First reports of disturbances in the Jordanian capital came in an Arab News Agency report from Cairo Thursday evening December 15 which said Jordanian students had entrenched themselves in the Jordanian embassy in Cairo to protest attempts to force Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact. A day earlier, the Jordan radio had reported the resignation of the Said al-Mufti Government which on Tuesday had been confronted with a parliamentary request for a statement on the negotiations taking place since the previous weekend with the British Chief of Staff, General Templer. The Health Minister, replying for the Government, said the British proposals had neither been accepted nor rejected. AFP reported December 12 that the former Jordan Minister Walid Salah had told a press conference in Beirut that Britain was exerting pressure on Jordan to join the Pact. And on December 17 the Jordan radio broadcast a REUTERS interview with the new premier, al-Majali who noted disagreement in the Said al-Mufti cabinet over whether the British proposals on the Pact should be presented to a "certain Arab state." The resignation of four ministers was subsequently reported.

The Jordan radio's account of events since the disorders began has been extremely reserved, and frequently in conflict with reportage from other area sources. Typical was its report of a "peaceful demonstration" in Habbus, from where the Arab News Agency reported clashes and casualties, and its announcement that police were "able to disperse" a demonstration in Amman where "seven persons were wounded and one was killed." The radio also reported "peaceful demonstrations" in Ramallah and Tulkarm and that in Hebron, a UNRWA office was attacked and in Jericho "great damage" done to a development project. Reports from other transmitters were occasionally contradicted. Early December 17 Cairo reported that 40 persons were killed, 200 seriously injured, 300 demonstrators arrested, and a state of emergency proclaimed. An hour later, the Jerusalem (Jordan) radio officially denied Damascus

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report about "disturbances yesterday and the killing and wounding of 40 persons." Any incident involving security or arrests was categorically denied. Later in the day, the same radio officially denied a report attributed to Cairo radio about the resignation of Arif al-Arif from the Jordan cabinet, adding that the Minister was "now attending a Cabinet meeting and carrying out his duties in a normal manner." Two hours after the Israeli radio reported that Arab Legion reinforcements had been brought into the Old City of Jerusalem and that the gates of the City Wall had been closed, the Jordan radio officially declared the gates were open.

Arab News Agency reports suggested a quite different picture. On Monday the agency reported that "boisterous" demonstrators marched in the streets calling for the resignation of the new government and for no joining of foreign military pacts. The same transmission noted that the Minister of Education had closed all schools until further notice-- Jordan radio announced December 19 that Jerusalem schools would reopen December 20--and that the Army had occupied all Government buildings. ANA quoted people coming from the north as reporting "violent demonstrations" in Irbid and other towns of the province--the Syrian AL QABAS said Irbid had been "completely destroyed"--in Karak, and southern towns. Demonstrations were reported still in progress in Nablus after three days, the post office in Hebron was said to be wrecked, and similar incidents were reported to have occurred in Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqilyah, Ramallah, Al-Birah and Bayt Jala, and at refugee camps in Jericho and al-Duhashi in the Hebron area, clashes resulting in many wounded were reported. The agency also noted that the Government had arrested certain members of the National Socialist Party, including Sulayman al-Nabulsi, secretary, as well as members of other parties for instigating the demonstrations.

Jordan radio December 20 carried the text of a royal decree dissolving the Chamber of Deputies and a statement by the premier calling for calm. "Nothing shall be decided upon before it is approved by the new representatives of the nation," he said. "There is nothing in the wind which should worry citizens. This is proof all tendentious rumors regarding alleged alliances are false." The Israeli radio featured a report of a protest by the Jordan premier to the Egyptian ambassador against the incitement of Jordanians by Cairo radio.

Cairo radio makes no secret of its sympathy with the demonstrators. An Arab-language transmission for Palestinians quoted the Lebanese al-Sharq as stating that officers of Jordan's national guard had met and called for "secession from the Amman government and separation of east and west Jordan." "Free officers" were said to have defected from the Army to the National Guard. The same broadcast carried a commentary which laid the "pressure and coercion now in evidence in Jordan" to the "crooked diplomacy" of the Western powers. A Cairo home service bulletin December 20 devoted nearly half its time to news from Jordan. Diplomats were quoted as reporting "large-scale" demonstrations in Jerusalem and attacks on foreign consulates. Other "Amman reports" from Cairo radio said seven persons had been killed and fifty wounded

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and that a number of officers had been arrested. Earlier, Cairo announced that the demonstrators in Amman had been lead through the streets by two former Ministers, Naim Abd al-Hadi and Sulayman Taqan.

Comment from other areas sources is limited. Syrian students are reported by ANA to have held sympathy demonstrations protesting the Jordan government's attitude to the Baghdad Pact. AFP reported December 20 that a number of Syrian deputies had risen in the Chamber to condemn "Majali's plot to prepare Jordan's adherence to the Baghdad Pact" and to ask the Syrian government "to intervene in the Jordanian crisis and help solve it in the interest of the Arabs." Cairo home service cited "reliable sources" in Damascus December 20 for a report that "high level" discussions were taking place between Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia "with regard to granting financial aid to Jordan in the event British financial aid is withheld." The French news agency reported from Beirut that news of the Jordan cabinet's attitude toward the Baghdad Pact had been received by the Lebanese press without surprise "but with bitterness and concern."

A statement from the royal palace in Amman December 14, broadcast by the Jordan radio may also be noted. It referred to "tendentious rumors and provocative statements" recently heard in connection with the Palestine question and the Government's manner of dealing with it, and stressed that this issue "heads all other questions, and for it all the country's material and moral capacities have been mobilized." The statement then pointed out that efforts were made to begin talks with the British Government for amendment of the Anglo-Jordan treaty of 1948 two years ago, and that the British had agreed to resume negotiations.